

**ATLANTIC LARGE COASTAL SHARK COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
OPEN ON JULY 1, 2003, AND
CLOSE ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2003**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is extending the emergency rule that establishes commercial annual quotas for ridgeback and non-ridgeback LCS at 783 metric tons (mt) dressed weight (dw) and 931 mt dw, respectively; establishes the commercial annual quota for SCS at 326 mt dw; and suspends the regulation on the ridgeback LCS minimum size (December 27, 2002, 67 FR 78990).

The commercial shark fisheries for all species groups will open on **July 1, 2003**. The semi-annual quotas are:

Species Group	Semi-annual quota level	Closure date
Ridgeback LCS (sandbar, silky, tiger)	424 mt dw	September 15, 2003, 11:30 p.m. local time
Non-ridgeback LCS (blacktip, spinner, bull, lemon, nurse, and the hammerheads)	498 mt dw	
SCS	163 mt dw	To be determined, as necessary
Blue sharks	136.5 mt dw	
Porbeagle sharks	46 mt dw	
Pelagic sharks other than blue or porbeagle	244 mt dw	

Of the 655.5 mt dw established for the 2002 second semiannual LCS season (67 FR 37354, May 29, 2002), 589 mt dw was taken. Per the emergency rule, NOAA Fisheries is adding the remaining 65 mt dw to the available quota for the second 2003 semi-annual LCS fishing season. This additional amount will be split equally between the ridgeback and non-ridgeback species groups. Based on weekly catch rates of the LCS second semi-annual 2000, 2001, and 2002 fishing seasons, NOAA Fisheries estimates that the ridgeback and non-ridgeback LCS second semi-annual 2003 adjusted quotas will be harvested by the end of September. Therefore, the **commercial fishery for ridgeback and non-ridgeback LCS will close on September 15, 2003, 11:30 p.m. local time**. Closure dates for the SCS, blue, porbeagle, and pelagic shark fisheries will be determined at a later date, as necessary.

During a closure, retention of, fishing for, possessing or selling LCS are prohibited for persons fishing aboard vessels issued a limited access permit under 50 CFR 635.4. The sale, purchase, trade, or barter of carcasses and/or fins of LCS harvested by a person aboard a vessel that has been issued a permit under 50 CFR 635.4 are prohibited, except for those that were harvested, offloaded, and sold, traded, or bartered prior to the closure and were held in storage by a dealer or processor.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to Atlantic Shark Fisheries interests to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, for copies of the emergency rule extension, or for copies of a shark commercial regulations brochure, contact Karyl Brewster-Geisz or Chris Rilling, 301-713-2347.

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John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

May 22, 2003
Date